



Lack of accord on I-10 widening costs postpones vote by state board

Jessica Coomes

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The State Transportation Board has delayed voting on a funding agreement to accelerate the Interstate 10 widening as three Southwest Valley cities struggle with how to split their costs.

Board members will meet again after they get a legal opinion from the Arizona Attorney General's Office. Board members, meeting Friday at Sedona City Hall, asked for 15 days to research the state Legislature's intent with setting aside \$10 million for the project, the board's options for allocating the money and practical implications for their choices.

"We want this information fast. We want to make a decision fast," board Chairman Joe Lane said. "We're not trying to slow anything down."

But even if the board had made its decision Friday, Avondale, Litchfield Park and Goodyear would have to find a funding compromise before the project can get started.

Under an agreement approved by the Maricopa Association of Governments, the cities have to pony up \$2.7 million. Avondale and Litchfield Park insist Goodyear should pitch in about three-quarters of the costs, but Goodyear agreed to pay for just more than half.

"I'm sorry there's a delay of 15 days, but quite frankly, there's 15 days of work to be done by the cities to get an agreement put together," Litchfield Park Mayor Tom Schoaf said.

Goodyear Mayor Jim Cavanaugh said he hopes the board doesn't take 15 days to reconvene.

"I'm really disappointed, less than in the money situation than in the delay," he said after state board meeting. "The people need this road widened without a delay. Even a 15-day delay is unacceptable."

Disbursing \$10 million

Before the Transportation Board decided to push back its vote, members talked about how to disburse the \$10 million the Legislature had set aside.

Board member Felipe Zubia said the three cities should get the full \$10 million. That would go against a MAG decision to give the cities \$7 million and require Avondale, Litchfield Park and Goodyear to pick up the rest, which amounts to about \$2.7 million.

As an alternative, board member Delbert Householder suggested the board follow MAG's recommendation to award the cities \$7 million. But he wanted to specify how the cities should split up the \$2.7 million under an arrangement to favor

Goodyear.

"I don't know that it's appropriate for the state board to tell the cities what the cities have to agree to pay," Schoaf said later. "The cities need to work it out ourselves."

Meanwhile, board member Bill Feldmeier said the panel should look into spreading the \$10 million across the state instead of keeping it only for the Southwest Valley project.

State Sen. Robert Blendu, R-Litchfield Park, told the board the \$10 million was intended to reimburse the cities for the interest costs to accelerate the project. MAG "decided to do something different with our state dollars," he said.

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